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SUBJECT: JAPAN LEANING TOWARD DEPLOYING TROOPS TO UNMIS

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Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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11. (C) SUMMARY: Japan will send a survey team to Sudan in the near future to explore the feasibility of dispatching Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) personnel to join UNMIS, according to MOFA Parliamentary Vice Foreign Minister Yasuhide Nakayama. Nakayama, who led Japan's delegation to the Third Sudan Consortium of Donors meeting in Oslo May 5, and then visited Juba, told the Charge d'Affaires (CDA) that the Chief Cabinet Secretary and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense have agreed to send the team, although Minister of Defense Ishiba and others at his ministry have doubts about whether forces should be dispatched. He requested CDA to "nonchalantly" urge MOD officials to approve the sending of forces to Sudan, as MOFA firmly believes Japan needs to play a greater role in peace-keeping operations, as well as to demonstrate in concrete terms its commitment to Africa. Nakayama also confirmed Japan's decision to provide USD 200 million in assistance to Sudan and briefed CDA on Japan's current level of engagement there. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Japan's growing interest in playing a greater role in Sudan has been demonstrated by a recent exchange of high-level visits. In March, Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda received a Sudanese delegation led by Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie, Assistant to the President of Sudan (reftel), and on May 2-6 MOFA Senior Vice Minister Itsunori Onodera became the first senior Japanese official to travel to Sudan, visiting Khartoum and Darfur where he observed UNAMID operations, visited with UN officials, went to a camp for internally displaced persons, and called on Sudanese government officials. Nakayama's trip to Juba followed on May 9. He met with officials of the Government of Southern Sudan, observed Japanese assistance projects, and spoke with officials from UNMIS, UNHCR, and the World Food Program. Nakayama met with the Charge May 16 to brief him on Sudan-related developments.

JAPAN'S PARTICIPATION AT OSLO DONORS MEETING

13. (C) Nakayama reported he had led Japan's delegation to the Oslo Donors meeting May 5, and that he was proud to announce Japan's commitment to pledge USD 200 million through 2011, noting this makes Japan the sixth largest contributor to Sudan. He added that although this is still confidential, Japan is also close to agreeing to forgive Sudan's 3.8 billion yen debt (approx. USD 37 million). Most of Japan's assistance funds to date have been focused on humanitarian assistance projects, he reported, but in the future funds will be available to help upgrade infrastructure and training to improve the river transportation system on the Nile. Nakayama said there are currently 56 Japanese citizens working on assistance projects in Sudan either with the

United Nations and other international organizations, or on their own Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) projects. Most of these personnel are in their 20's and half are women, he said.

14. (C) Although the Oslo meeting was hosted by the World Bank, Nakayama noted that all the Sudanese officials he spoke with privately expressed a clear preference for bilateral assistance, rather than aid funneled through the Bank or other international organizations. The reasons they gave were that when a third organization is involved, some of the funds donated get "skimmed" by them, and the procedures imposed make the process too time consuming.

SUPPORT GROWING FOR SDF DEPLOYMENT...

15. (C) Nakayama confirmed press reports that on May 13, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura, Foreign Minister Koumura, and Defense Minister Ishiba had met and agreed to send a survey team to Sudan to prepare for the deployment of SDF personnel.

However, Ishiba and some of his colleagues at the Ministry of Defense remain somewhat hesitant about sending personnel to Sudan. Nevertheless, Nakayama expects a survey team consisting of administrative and clerical personnel to travel to Sudan probably sometime in June, after Japan hosts the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development ("TICAD IV") at the end of this month but before the Lake Toya G-8 summit takes place in July. If things go well, a larger, more substantive detachment would be dispatched sometime after the G-8 summit concludes. (NOTE: Later the

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same day as Nakayama's meeting with CDA, Ishiba told members of the press that although MOD "will actively consider future measures" to deal with the Sudan situation, he denied a decision has been made to dispatch a survey team. END NOTE.)

16. (C) The SDF unit sent would most likely be an engineering unit with the capabilities to repair roads and bridges that are damaged by flood waters during the rainy season, said Nakayama. Responding to a question from CDA, he said the dispatch of SDF personnel to participate in UNMIS would not require the enactment of new legislation. During the Oslo meeting and in his visit to Juba, Nakayama met with officials from both the North and South and said everyone he spoke with was aware of Japan's limitations on military deployment set forth in Article IX of its constitution but strongly supported the idea of Japanese SDF participation in UNMIS.

...BUT MOD REMAINS NERVOUS

17. (C) Providing a glimpse into the inter-ministerial process, Nakayama explained that MOFA is anxious to see the deployment of the SDF to Sudan as well as to other peacekeeping operations on the basis that such deployments bolster Japan's image as a key member of the international community and, in the case of Sudan, demonstrates Japan's commitment to Africa. MOD, on the other hand, is much more cautious. During the May 13 meeting, Minister of Defense Ishiba suggested that if Japan wants to deploy peacekeepers, they should be sent to less hostile environments, such as Cyprus. FM Koumura, said Nakayama, replied only that he agreed it would be a good idea to send forces to Cyprus, not mentioning that this should be a substitute for Sudan. The unspoken message was that SDF should be sent to Cyprus or other peacekeeping operations in addition to, not in lieu of, Sudan.

18. (C) Nakayama also revealed he was a bit nervous that some of the deliberations about deploying SDF have been "prematurely" reported in the press. He is worried that too

much publicity will cause the Ministry of Defense to suspect MOFA is using the press to pressure them into agreeing by making it look to the public like it's already a done deal, and thus cause MOD to dig in their heels. However, in the next breath, Nakayama said he was not averse to using the press to do just that: "We must calmly examine the situation and if it is necessary to use the press to steer the issue, we will do so." Nakayama said it would be helpful if, should the opportunity arise, the CDA or others at the Embassy were to nonchalantly mention to our MOD contacts that we believe it would be a good idea for Japan to deploy forces in support of UNMIS.

COMMENT

19. (C) Nakayama, 37, is a third generation, second-term member of the House of Representatives and is clearly interested in making a name for himself as a Parliamentary Vice Minister at MOFA. He came with pictures of his trip and was prepared to show us videos of his activities in Oslo and Juba. He said he had already personally told the Prime Minister that he assesses southern Sudan to be safe for the deployment of SDF forces and thinks this will help convince him to deploy an SDF contingent. Finally, Nakayama revealed another reason he believes Japan should play a more visible role in Sudan: to keep up with the neighbors. Several times he mentioned that officials he met were pro-Chinese, and he also pointed out South Korea has deployed a small number of troops in support of PKOs in both Sudan and Cambodia. As the chair of the TICAD and G-8 processes, the time is right for Japan to become more involved in Africa, he said, adding that Japan certainly does not want to trail South Korea in this field.
SCHIEFFER